

This appears to be the first specimen of the species taken in the Andaman Islands.

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REFERENCES

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ELLERMAN, J. R. (1961): The Fauna of India, Mammalia, Rodentia. Delhi.
MILLER, G. S., Jr. (1902): The Mammals of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. *Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus.* 24: 751-795.

[Humayun Abdulali (1965, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 61, at p. 495) in a recent visit to the Andamans saw Palm Squirrels (*Funambulus*) near Port Blair, but did not note the species. He conjectures that they are a recent introduction.—EDS.]

5. A NOTE ON THE BREEDING HABITS OF THE WHITEBELLIED RAT, *RATTUS NIVIVENTER MENTOSUS* THOMAS

(With a photograph)

Very little is known regarding the ecology and breeding habits of the Whitebellied Rat, *Rattus niviventer mentosus* Thomas. The only information available regarding its ecology is from the observations of Shortridge (in Wroughton 1916, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 24: 307), and Roonwal (1949, *Trans. Nat. Inst. Sci. India* 3: 67-122).

On 10 December 1964, in the course of our study of the field ecology of rats and squirrels in the Khasi Hills, we came across a nest on a tree about 12 ft. high from the ground, on the edge of a scrub jungle at Barapani (alt. c. 3500 ft.) about 12 miles north of Shillong.

The nest (Photograph) was situated at a fork on the tree. The materials used in the nest were stems, leaves, and spikes of grass *Imperata* sp., lined with bird feathers. It was more or less spherical in shape with a single central opening about 1 cm. in diameter. The outer circumference of the nest was about 45-50 cm. and the inner about 20-25 cm.

The nest contained three young rats, more or less equal in size. Their eyes were unopened, fur smooth and well differentiated, and the belly white with the tail bicoloured as in the adult *R. niviventer mentosus*.

The young when disturbed burrowed deeper into the nest.

Their measurements (in mm.) were as follows :

Head and body	42, 35, 32
Tail	48, 45, 42
Ear	6, 6, 6
Hindfoot	13, 13, 12



Nest of the Whitebellied Rat, *Rattus liviventer mentosus* Thomas in the bifurcation of a tree, c. 12 ft. from the ground

Roonwal (1949) noted that this rat is semi-arboreal, and prefers evergreen, and riverine jungle.

The present case as well as the data of an earlier collection by this Department of gravid females at upper Shillong in November suggest a breeding season for this rat in early winter in this area. However, Roonwal (*ibid.*) collected females with prominent mammae in July-August but without foetus.

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